



Press Release

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Contact: Pamela Bush
508-475-0032, pbush@biama.org

Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts Launches Campaign to Reach Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries Pilot Project To Serve As Model for Nation

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) is collaborating with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) on a federal grant to improve access to needed care and services by veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars with traumatic brain injuries (TBI). TBI has been named the "signature wound" of the war on terror because of the large number of veterans sustaining TBIs, primarily due to the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

"Too often veterans return home and although they look the same, they and their loved ones know something is very wrong," said Arlene Korab, Executive Director of BIA-MA. "Many of these soldiers may have a brain injury."

According to a recent issue of *Stars and Stripes*, the military newsletter, as many of 60 percent of soldiers who survive external injuries from bomb blasts may have a brain injury. Symptoms include: headaches, memory problems, irritability, trouble organizing thoughts, and difficulty finding words.

"BIA-MA is reaching out to these veterans," said Korab. "We are partnering with SHIP to assist veterans and family members with their concerns and to advise them about resources." In addition, the association will be working with the Statewide Head Injury Program to organize support groups for veterans and their families.

"This initiative will be documented and serve as a model for the rest of the state and the nation," said Debra Kamen, Director of SHIP. "Massachusetts is the only state awarded a federal grant that focuses only on systems of care, including community based supports for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan."

Initially, the outreach is focused on 61 cities and towns, north and west of Boston, including Fitchburg, Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill, Salem, Lynn, and Gloucester. Three billboards, located in Haverhill, Lawrence, and Lynn, will help reach veterans over the next three months. In addition, public service announcements, flyers, and other materials have been produced. For more information or assistance, veterans and their families should call the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts at 1-800-242-0030.

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